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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000953

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS; NSC FOR E. MILLARD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [CE](#) [NO](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Recent meetings show the way forward for Sri Lanka peace process is troubled

Refs: (A) Colombo 915, and previous

(U) Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead.
Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Opposition Leader Wickremesinghe thought the Co-Chairs statement was good, but that the President and her government do not understand the psychology of the LTTE, and are determined to begin talks on the final ("hard") issues. He also thinks the military is using LTTE rebel Karuna to attack the LTTE. When pressed to support the peace process, he said that the Government needs to make a statement laying out its policy.

2. (C) SUMMARY CONTINUED: Norwegian Ambassador Brattskar says that the two sides are moving further apart, rather than closer. The LTTE will meet with its diaspora experts in Switzerland in mid-July. President Kumaratunga called the Norwegian Foreign Minister to complain that she had already made many concessions. No one expects any movement until after the July 10 Provincial Council elections. END SUMMARY.

Ranil: She just does not understand.

3. (C) Ambassador met with Opposition Leader (and former Prime Minister) Ranil Wickremesinghe the evening of June 7 to discuss the recent Co-Chairs meeting in Brussels. Ranil said that he had read the Co-chairs' statement and thought it was "good." At the moment, he did not plan any action on the peace process: "She has the mandate, not me." President Kumaratunga and Foreign Minister Kadirgamar, he said, did not understand the psychology of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). "They only want to discuss an interim administration. They will never agree to discuss final issues now." He had discussed this with Kadirgamar, but Kadirgamar had insisted that he wanted to take up hard issues now. Ranil said that he had ignored some transgressions by the LTTE because it was the only way to keep negotiations going. The President did not understand this.

4. (C) Ranil said that the Government was playing a dangerous game because the Sri Lanka Army (Department of Military Intelligence, "DMI") was using the breakaway LTTE rebel Karuna to get back at the LTTE. Ranil said he "knew" this was the case -- he had sources in the military who told him so. This was another example of the Government's dangerous game.

5. (C) Ambassador said that the Co-Chairs statement was directed at all parties in Sri Lanka. If the international community were to keep its interest alive, we expected everyone to support peace. Pressing the point, Ambassador said that he thought comments such as recent remarks by UNP spokesman G.L. Peiris that the President's efforts were a "sham" peace process were not helpful. One could criticize what the President wanted to do, Ambassador said, but should not imply that she was not interested in peace. Ranil said that the President and her ruling coalition needed to make a clear policy statement on the peace process. (Comment: The President is avoiding this because she could never get her JVP coalition partners to go along with anything reasonable.)

Norwegians: Getting worse, not better

6. (C) Ambassador met with Indian High Commissioner Sen and Norwegian Ambassador Brattskar mid-day on June 8, along with EU and Canadian Chiefs of Mission. (Brattskar had arrived back from Oslo, where he had stopped after Brussels, only that same morning.) Brattskar said that the Norwegians were trying to put together a statement which would allow talks to resume. The Norwegians were in constant touch with both sides, receiving messages from both, but unfortunately the

sides were moving farther apart. Each side was sending "unhelpful clarifications." The Government insistence on holding "parallel" talks on final settlement issues was, Brattskar said, just a non-starter.

17. (C) Each side was afraid that giving in would prejudice the final outcome. The LTTE had rejected the plan to resurrect a NERF-like mechanism to disburse aid because they felt if they did so, the Government would never seriously discuss the LTTE's Interim Self-Governing Administration (ISGA). The Government did not want to discuss the ISGA alone because it feared that if an ISGA were set up, the LTTE would have no incentive to discuss final issues. Brattskar said that President Kumaratunga had called the Norwegian Foreign Minister the day before to complain that she had made many compromises, but the Tigers had not made any.

LTTE issues -----

18. (C) Sen said that he had heard that the GSL had been using Karuna and his faction to get back at the LTTE, but that the military had now been given orders to stop providing assistance to Karuna. Brattskar said that the LTTE was now preparing for a week-long meeting they would hold in Switzerland beginning July 20. The meeting would include the legal and constitutional experts from the Tamil diaspora who had helped the LTTE prepare their ISGA proposal.

Messy Political Situation -----

19. (C) All agreed that the current political situation makes it particularly difficult to make progress:

-- The Government still does not have enough votes to show a majority in Parliament. (See Septel for report on June 8 altercation in parliament.)

-- The JVP faction within the government continues to snipe at the peace process (see Reftels).

-- Pending Provincial Council elections on July 10, no one wants to make a dramatic move.

110. (C) COMMENT: We believe that Ranil Wickremesinghe heard the Ambassador's message about not trying to take political advantage by attacking the peace process. Wickremesinghe made it clear, however, that he is not about to lend support to the President. Ranil's analysis of the psychology of the Tigers, and the need to induce them to participate in the talks may be accurate. The President's problem is that she directed the electoral campaign against Ranil on the basis that he gave in too easily to the Tigers -- now she has to show that she is harder to budge. Combined with Kadirgamar's insistence on discussing final issues, the result is a poisonous atmosphere.

111. (U) Minimize considered.

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